

OUR THEME FOR THIS WEEK

Sunday, August 21, 2011

“A GUARANTEED, ROCK-SOLID INVESTMENT”

ISAIAH 51: 1 – 6

Recent shaky financial times have turned what were thought to be “rock-solid investments” into questionable – if not non-existent – returns. What “rock-solid” spiritual investments have you made?

This morning, a thoroughly distraught and disenchanted Israel is challenged to invest their hearts and lives, once again, in the very Rock from which they had been hewn (cut or carved) and called in the first place. A return to the Lord, the Rock of their salvation, will restore His people from a wasteland to the beauty of Eden, where God blessed, tends, and cares for His people.

May we also make sure that we have a faith investment in our Lord, the Rock of our salvation, who promises not only the instant blessings of His presence, but also long-term, eternal rewards.

Introit

Psalm 28

L: To You, O LORD, I call; my rock, be not deaf to me,

C: Lest, if You be silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit.

L: Hear the voice of my pleas for mercy, when I cry to You for help,

C: When I lift up my hands toward Your most holy sanctuary.

L: Do not drag me off with the wicked, with the workers of evil,

C: Who speak peace with their neighbors while evil is in their hearts.

L: Give to them according to their work and according to the evil of their deeds;

C: Give to them according to the work of their hands; render them their due reward.

L: Because they do not regard the works of the LORD or the work of His hands,

C: He will tear them down and build them up no more.

L: Blessed be the LORD!

C: For He has heard the voice of my pleas for mercy.

L: The LORD is my strength and my shield; in Him my heart trusts, and I am helped;

C: My heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to Him.

L: The LORD is the strength of His people;

C: He is the saving refuge of His anointed.

L: Oh, save Your people and bless Your heritage!

C: Be their shepherd and carry them forever.

ALL: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

The Old Testament Lesson

Isaiah 51: 1 – 6

(God lifts the spirits of His people by encouraging them to the Rock of their salvation – the One who will restore and bring His salvation, not only to this world, but for eternity.)

¹“Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the LORD: look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. ²Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, that I might bless him and multiply him. ³For the LORD comforts Zion; he comforts all her waste places and makes her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song.

⁴“Give attention to me, my people, and give ear to me, my nation; for a law will go out from me, and I will set my justice for a light to the peoples. ⁵My righteousness draws near, my salvation has gone out, and my arms will judge the peoples; the coastlands hope for me, and for my arm they wait. ⁶Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and they who dwell in it will die in like manner; but my salvation will be forever, and my righteousness will never be dismayed.”

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Epistle Lesson

Romans 11: 33 – 12: 8

(St. Paul points the Roman Christians – and all of us – to the awesome wealth of God’s grace and glory. God’s children are challenged to respond to God’s amazing character with transformed lives that begin with a changed mindset and pattern of thinking. God’s children are then challenged to honor Him by putting His gifts into action.)

^{11:33}Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! ³⁴“For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?”

³⁵“Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” ³⁶For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

^{12:1}I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

³For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Gospel Lesson

Matthew 16: 13 – 20

(Peter is led by God the Father to confess Jesus as the Anointed One promised by God and the Son of a very much alive God, in contrast to the lifeless gods of the world. Jesus promises to build His Church – all who come to faith – on Peter’s rock-solid confession which centers in Christ, the Son of God.)

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” ²⁰ Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.